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Peace Operations Involving Regional Organizations

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Conclusions

Regional Organizations

The end of the Cold War has diminished the seriousness of external threats to the United States but increased their number. Touted as a candidate for sheriff in a world without law, the United States accepts that it has obligations but is wary about taking on unlimited responsibility.

- Yet problems continue to erupt in a very fluid environment.
- Multilateral crisis management under some sort of international mandate is one attractive possibility.
- Operating under the mandate of an international organization, however, requires advance planning and engagement.
- Despite ongoing improvements the UN remains an imperfect instrument.
- Regional organizations are even less capable. This situation has fostered renewed interest in regionalism. Regional organizations have both advantages and disadvantages for this role.
- The sense of "ownership" which member states feel in regional organizations encourages a greater sense of legitimacy in its deliberations and decisions. The more modest scope of these deliberations and decisions tends to allay concerns. Being more homogenous they can sometimes more easily produce consensus; have greater acceptability by the disputants; and presumably have greater insight to local problems and the root causes of conflict.
- However, many express concerns about their impartiality. Apart from NATO and the EU, few regional organizations have significant resources or effective bureaucracies. In addition to the usual conflict of interests among members, most regional organizations have difficulty integrating the regional "Great Power" into their decision making and operations. Many countries worry about the tendency of larger powers to use regional organizations as cover for unilateral interventions.

- This particular problem has bedeviled the OAU since its founding, beginning with the ambitions of Nkrumah's Ghana and continuing with Nigerian attempts to use its mass and riches to assume a leadership role. The future role of South Africa is yet to be determined. On the other hand, the ECOWAS operation in Liberia was possible only because of Nigeria although many believe the failure to date of ECOMOG stems from the too prominent and possibly too partisan role of Nigeria. Elsewhere, Western reluctance to adopt the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a peacekeeping instrumentality certainly is based upon skepticism about the dominant role of Russia.

Partnership and Cooperation

Conventional wisdom argues that regional organizations are better suited to play an active role at the low end of the peace operations scale: preventive diplomacy, mediation, monitoring and observing, and traditional peacekeeping. Here they offer the prospect of early preventive effort of resolving conflicts before they escalate. The balance of strengths and weaknesses might indicate a more consistently useful role in crises dominated by humanitarian concerns. Also promising is the potential of regional organizations as legitimizing authorities for specific peace operations, wrestling with the problem of failed states, and a culture of cooperation for peace operations in general.

These advantages, however, loom larger in theory than in practice and most regional organizations, as presently constituted, have difficulty in mounting effective operations without the assistance of outside agencies, such as interested extra-regional governments or organizations. The UN, for all its shortcomings, has capabilities lacking in most regional organizations and can help produce a global perspective.

A fruitful relationship already exists between the UN and many regional organizations: 16 of them already are or have shown interest in cooperation with the UN in peace operations. However such cooperative arrangements are not without implementation problems: witness the serious command and control problems bedeviling the UN-NATO relationship in the former Yugoslavia.

Nevertheless regional organizations offer further possibilities of enhancing the international community's ability to deal with at least Chapter VI operations if viewed as "first reaction" institutions, equipped with modestly enhanced peacekeeping mechanisms, considered as the potential local partners of the United Nations, and backed by the more extensive capabilities of the UN.

The Secretary-General Tries Again

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is wrestling with the problem of managing the UN's responsibility for a growing number of threats to international peace and security with inadequate resources and, often, unclear mandates. In his "Agenda for Peace" he expressed interest in the relationship between the UN and regional organizations in the collective management of threats to peace and security. On August 1-2, 1994 Boutros-Ghali invited the heads of eleven major organizations to New York to discuss this matter. On January 3, 1995 he issued a report entitled "Supplement to the Agenda For Peace" which calls for greater burden sharing in peace operations between the UN and regional organizations. Numerous General Assembly resolutions call for expanded cooperation between the UN and regional organizations (although they remain, as usual, somewhat vague on the modalities and financial implications).

The "Supplement" makes a clear distinction between Chapter VI and Chapter VII activities. In essence, Boutros- Ghali now explicitly accepts the proposition that the Secretary-General should restrict himself to managing Chapter VI peace-keeping while Chapter VII peace enforcement activities should be run directly out of the Security Council, presumably by "contracting out" more ambitious operations to multinational forces led by major powers with special interest in the dispute in question like the US in Haiti or Russia in the Caucasus. Accepting the UN's limited capability, the Secretary-General's renewed interest in cooperation between the UN and regional organizations may be seen as a search for partners, however limited they themselves might also be.

As the Secretary-General has repeatedly and publicly expressed his unhappiness with the growing disparity between the Security Council peacekeeping mandates and the resources given to him to implement them (the Supplement includes another plea for prompt payment of UN assessments), UN Member States may assume that he will continue to press these and other proposals (especially if elected to a second term as Secretary-General).

Eurasia

Europe has, if anything, an over-abundance of regional security organizations, with somewhat unclear conflict resolution mandates.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (ONCE) is the most inclusive regional organization. In 1992 the ONCE adopted a peace-keeping role in the context of conflict prevention, and made reference to drawing on the resources of NATO, the European Union (EU), the Western European Union (WEU), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The ONCE has begun to evolve from a purely conference relationship into a security organization by creating some operational capability, (e.g., observer missions in Moldova, Kosovo, and Nagorno-Karabakh).

NATO is a regional bloc created for collective defense which is now authorized to support UN and ONCE peace operations out of the NATO area. It was recently engaged in Bosnia, Iraq and elsewhere and is feeling the pressure of the tempo of these peace operations. The confused command and control situation in Bosnia has reflected poorly on both the UN and NATO. There is consensus in NATO that in future peace operations it must be in sole command if it is to participate as an organization.

NATO is considering the establishment of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept which would allow some of NATO's European forces to be transferred to the WEU for peacekeeping purposes. The CJTF would empower the WEU and the EU to become significant peacekeeping contributors. In the future, the EU may seek more independent means of participating in multilateral peace operations.

The Partnership for Peace program also provides a new regional peacekeeping potential, with twenty-five partners joining NATO's sixteen members. The Partners are conducting joint exercises and could become a peacekeeping force for Central and Eastern Europe.

Russian desires to play a significant role in conflict resolution in its area, if only through involvement of the CIS in Georgia, Tajikistan and prospectively in Nagorno- Karabakh, are not surprising. Moscow appears interested in obtaining a "hunting license" from the UN or the ONCE

while the West wants tighter control over both objectives and methods if it is to authorize peace operations by the CIS or any of its members (most notably Russia).

Given these differences in perspectives and capabilities, not to mention national interests, Western, Central, and Russian roles and objectives will have to be melded and integrated in some fashion if multilateral peacekeeping is to become a useful instrument in Central and Eastern Europe.

Latin America

The Organization of American States (OAS), the oldest regional security organization, has long been active in conflict resolution, largely in prevention and mediation such as in Nicaragua and El Salvador where it cooperated with the UN and the United States. Its historic role in its own hemisphere was the cause of the San Francisco debate over the relative authority of the new global organization (the UN) and regional bodies which produced the Chapter VIII compromise. By assuming the responsibility for defending democratic governments (by resolution in the 21st General Assembly and amendment of Article 9 in the 16th Special Session, 1992), the OAS has complicated its traditional commitment to non-interventionism and modified its original Rio Treaty mandate as a collective security organization created to deal with extra-hemispheric threats. Tension between the United States and the other members of the OAS has been a dominant theme of OAS politics, arising from a perception that the United States has attempted to use the organization as a Cold War instrument (Dominican Republic, Cuba, Grenada) or a cover for unilateral action (Panama, Haiti).

A larger role for the OAS in peace operations is dependant on finding a mutually accommodating understanding between the United States and its hemispheric neighbors. The post-Cold War era offers an opportunity to reach such an understanding, especially in light of the spread of democratic government, regional economic integration, and strong OAS support for democracy.

Africa

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also has a coherent regional identity but faces an expanding agenda of crises with a weak organizational structure and limited resources. It has not been very successful in crisis management on its own, in Chad, Rwanda, or now Burundi, and flatly refused to become involved in Liberia (leaving it to a Nigeria-led ECOWAS), Somalia, Angola, or Mozambique (leaving them to the UN). Individual countries, however, often participate in UN operations.

For historical reasons the OAU insists on the intertwined principles of the sanctity of established national borders and non-interventionism. However the increasing difficulty of many African governments in providing even minimal government is producing a wave of political and humanitarian crises forcing African governments to reconsider these hitherto sacred principles. Effective OAU crisis management will require more robust and competent institutions. There have been some interesting initiatives in this area by various African sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS and ISAD.

The United States is attempting to invigorate the OAU by providing funds (\$3.5 million to date, and \$4.5 million authorized), advice, and technical assistance, hoping to increase the OAU's activism and competence in regional conflict resolution. To the extent the program is successful,

the need for outside powers to engage themselves in African politics and developments will be reduced.

Asia-Pacific

There is no region wide political or security organization. The problem of regional powers is particularly serious in Asia where most governments work at using one of the potential hegemon (the United States) as a bulwark against the other two (China and Japan). Asian efforts are limited to sub-regional bodies and the potential role for regional organizations in peacekeeping is more likely to lie with them or ad hoc coalitions. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), despite its economic orientation, has dipped its toe into peace operations by offering its good offices to the Cambodian combatants with evident implicit Chinese approval. ASEAN recently floated ideas for confidence building and nuclear free zones, and is sponsoring the ASEAN Regional Forum but these initiatives remain in an embryonic stage.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) sponsored consultations on terrorism but the fear of India's hegemonic ambitions has precluded broader discussion. The recently created South Pacific Regional Peacekeeping Force in Bougainville is composed only of South Pacific island states (Australia, Fiji, etc).

Middle East

The Middle East is the least promising area for peace operations by regional organizations. The Arab-Israeli conflict effectively precludes the creation of a regional organization. While both the Arab League and the Islamic Conference could claim an "Islamic" regional jurisdiction, neither have mechanisms or mandates to deal with inter-Arab or Islamic conflicts. The silence of both of these organizations in the Iran-Iraq war and when Iraq invaded Kuwait was deafening. It is unlikely that any of the existing Middle East regional bodies will take up a conflict resolution role, although the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) shows some organizational promise.

Recommendations

In the words of a senior Administration official, the policy now is to "ratchet down expectations especially with regard to peace enforcement, while ratcheting up capabilities, especially at the low end of the scale..." Achieving this objective will require greater consensus among UN members and regional organizations as to the criteria and processes by which peacekeeping responsibilities will be shared. Obtaining greater consensus in this area will require U.S. leadership, along the following lines:

- *Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to encourage general acceptance of regional organizations as the initial instrument of choice for "low end" peace operations (preventive diplomacy, mediation, observer missions);*
- *A U.S. offer of technical and financial assistance to regional organizations for creation or improvement of conflict resolution mechanisms (replicating the OAU program);*
- *A United States reimbursable revolving fund (say \$10 million) which the OAS (our regional organization) could draw on to meet emergency conflict resolution needs.*

PEACE OPERATIONS

In addition, the U.S. could lobby (bilaterally and multilaterally) for a more formal UN relationship with regional organizations involving the creation of a number of UN mechanisms to provide formal UN cooperation with regional organizations:

- a formal role for competent regional organizations in Security Council deliberations under Chapters VI and VII;
- a high-level focal point and a consultative mechanism in the UN Secretariat responsible for regular contact and planning;
- a UN revolving fund to finance regional organizations' activities;
- stand-by arrangements for equipment and personnel;
- a UN technical assistance program (joint training, SOPs, secondment of personnel, etc);
- coordination of national peacekeeping training centers (Canada, Australia, Nordics) with UN programs.

If the United States wishes to avoid the responsibility for being the world's policeman but also wishes to see better management of international security issues, a modest investment along these lines in regional organizations can be seen as a prudent investment.

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